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ABSTRACT

A microsociological study of the dual-career family focused on the extent to which career mothers and fathers share child care responsibilities. Dependent variables included the amount of time dual-career parents spend in child care and the number of caregiving tasks they share; independent variables were the employment-related determinants of time spent in child care. The 49 couples who participated in the study were individually given an initial interview, an explanation of the study, a child care time/task analysis log, and a 100-item questionnaire. Participants then selected a week during a given 2-month period to complete the log, recording their involvement in child care. Total minutes spent in caregiving tasks were tallied under five major child care dimensions: physical, affective, cognitive, social, and other. Couples were then categorized according to traditional, transitional, or role sharing/egalitarian patterns with respect to the total time they shared in child care and each child care dimension. The time analysis identified 20 egalitarian, 26 transitional, and 3 traditional couples, each of whom spent an average of 54 hours weekly in child care activities. Wives averaged 28 hours; husbands averaged 26. Chi square analysis employed to test associations between employment variables and parental role-sharing variables indicated no significant relationships. (RH)

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Dual Career Families and the Parental Roles They Assume with Their Young Children*

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Introduction

The dual-career family represents an increasingly prevalent life-style in present day society. In 1980, 48 percent of the labor force was female and approximately 60 percent of those females were married (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1980). Statistics also reveal a trend for more and more women with very young children to enter the job market. "For the school-aged child, there is more than one chance in two that a mother will be employed. For a child between the ages of three and five, there is close to one chance in two. And, during a child's infancy and toddlerhood, the chance is one in three that mother will be employed" (Women's Bureau, 1977). The most significant change in women's employment, has been the great increase in working mothers of preschoolers who are married (Reiss, 1980).

The dual-career family is one in which both heads of the household pursue careers and at the same time maintain a family life together (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971). The husband and wife who successfully combine full-time satisfying work and a successful family life must share fully the responsibilities of caregiving for the children. Thus, the sharing of parental roles requires equal childrearing responsibilities (Whitehurst, 1977; Bird, 1979; Pleck, 1977; Erickson, et al., 1979; Tognoli, 1979; Defrain, 1979; Albrecht, et al., 1979; and Schwartz, 1980).

However, the research literature points out that while fathers from dual-career families are assisting more with caregiving for their children, employed mothers still have the primary role of childrearing (Holmstrom, 1972; Whitehurst, 1977; Lein, 1979; Eversoll, 1979; Tognoli, 1979; Bird, 1979; and Sawin and Parke, 1979). It has been found that the traditional division of labor in parenting remains unaltered and both husbands and wives have difficulty relinquishing responsibility for their gender-linked expectations

in the family, respectfully as breadwinner and homemaker. In this division, the mother is expected to exhibit the primary caregiver and custodial behaviors, and father is expected to provide secondary support for the mother-child dyad (Eversoll, 1979).

There are a number of psycho-sociological reasons which have been identified as contributing to the polarization of sex roles for parents. First, the process of childhood socialization teaches gender role expectations and behaviors (Tognoli, 1979; Hartley, 1960; Maccoby, 1966; Kagan, 1964; Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). Secondly, the existence of social pressures and expectations coerce mothers and fathers to fulfill sex-appropriate roles (Lein, 1979; Rapoport, 1971; Reiss, 1980). Thirdly, Defrain (1979) found that flexible work schedules was the social change most needed by couples sharing child care equally. Fourth, social support networks are deficient for dual-career families, i.e., daycare, counseling services, parent education (Lein, 1979).

"Marriage has been treated primarily as a role relationship in which duties, obligations, rights and perquisites have been assigned to the man-husband and women-wife along structured lines" (Rapoport, 1978). The dual-career family represents an adaptive unit in the stratification system coping with the interfaces of work and family roles. The research literature points out that dual-career wives have the greatest bargaining and decision-making power due to their financial contributions and educational achievements i.e., resource power. Thus, dual-career wives are in a better bargaining position to suggest or demand a more egalitarian marital role organization. Although it is generally the career wife who truly accomodates the strains of combining work and home, dual-career couples must employ a variety of individual coping strategies in order to successfully adapt to the work-family system. It is important to recognize and understand dual-career families

and their innovating roles as they try to successfully integrate, without precedent, career and family.

Some kinds of social change occur through interventions at a macroscopic level, some through changes of a diffuse kind at the microscopic levels of social organization. Some occur through self-conscious, deliberate, and purposeful goal-directed action, others through adaptive responses to dissatisfactions or strains intrinsic in the situation (Safilios-Rothschild, 1972). The dual-career family expresses both in structure and in value one variant emerging in our post-industrial society which is adapting to contemporary social change and the strains inherent in family-work relationships. Thus the dual-career family has been identified by social-scientists as a social unit engaged in a microscopic experiment with social change (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1972; Trist, 1968; Goode, 1963; Bell, 1968; and Reiss, 1980).

Rapoport and Rapoport (1972) have done extensive research on the dual-career family and they suggest a microsociological approach to the study of family and social change. "Because each family unit functions in a larger social system of relationships and interactions, the innovating patterns which are attempted by dual-career families may be seen as going 'against the grain' of society in various ways" (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1972). These families are working out patterns of living--together and in relation to their network of relationships--that are without clear precedent. Sociologically, they are viewed as innovating models mandating structural changes in the areas of social organization of work, domestic role relationships and the "built environment" (Bell, 1970).

Families in which both husband and wife pursue careers (i.e., jobs which are highly salient personally, have a developmental sequence, and require a high degree of commitment) and at the same time establish a family life with at least one child under five years old concerns the researcher in this study. Rapoport and Rapoport (1971) identify these couples as unusually visible and

articulate, providing society with exemplary models of families who incorporate untraditional parental roles and employment. Parental roles in dual-career families with young children have rarely been studied, although much social-science research has focused on husband/wife roles.

The following factors have been considered in this micro-sociological analysis of the dual-career family: the gender of the parents; the caregiving responsibilities (tasks) for the young children in the family; the time spent (during one full week) on each caregiving responsibility; and the determinants of greater parental sharing. For the purpose of this study, caregiving responsibilities have been defined as those responsibilities that parents must assume in order to meet the physical, affective, cognitive and social needs of their young children.

To provide further insights into the roles that dual-career parents assume with their young children, the determinants of greater parental sharing have been explored. In keeping with the conference theme of family linkages, I have chosen to focus on the work-related determinants (i.e.,Structural- total number of husband/wife work hours; job flexibility; Attitudinal-personal fulfillment with career; and consideration of family career status) for this presentation.

Methodology

Design of the Study

This microsociological study of the dual-career family focuses on the extent to which career mothers and fathers share child care responsibilities. The dependent variables for the study are the amount of time and caregiving responsibilities (tasks) that dual-career parents share in childcare, while the work-related determinants of greater (or lesser) shared child care are viewed as the independent variables.

Sample

Families in which both husband and wife pursue careers i.e., jobs which are highly salient personally, have a developmental sequence, and require a high degree of commitment, and at the same time establish a family life with at least one child under five years old, comprised the population for this study. A snowball sampling technique was employed to select dual-career families from representative career positions in Indianapolis, Indiana. Professional associations, employers, women's groups, daycare centers, colleagues and friends were asked to offer a list of dual-career families who might be recruited for the study. A strategic sampling method was then employed to gain families who were representative of a variety of career positions. The size of the sample was limited to fifty family units because of the interview techniques and convenience to subjects.

Over eighty-five (85) dual-career couples were recruited for the study, with thirty-six (36) couples declining to participate. Many families gave reasons of new babies, new jobs, illness, job stress and demands, etc. for not participating in the study. Although the researcher made an aggressive attempt to recruit minority couples for the study, the final racial breakdown was two (2) minority couples, one (1) inter-racial couple and 46 caucasian couples.

In terms of demographic characteristics of the sample, both husbands and wives had extremely high educational levels with 39% of the parents holding doctorate degrees, (23%) graduate degrees, and (33%) college degrees. The husbands and wives represented the careers of business (21%); attorneys (16%); physicians (15%); medical-related (e.g., biologist, pharmacist, nurse) (13%); artists/musicians (10%); education (9%); accountants (4%); engineers (3%); architects (2%); dentists (2%); social workers (2%); and journalism (1%). The median couple income was $61,000.00 and the mean ($\bar{X}$) income for the career couples was $76,320.51. Even though wives held more graduate degrees (35%) than their spouses (27%), husbands outearned their wives by an average of $11,000. The income range for the families varied between $19,000 and $300,000. Ten couples chose not to respond to the income measure during the interview.

Other significant demographic data relates to the children. The average number of children in the families was 1.7, with families ranging from having one to five children. Families in the study had children ranging in age from 10 weeks old to 15 years old, with only those children who were under five years being focused on in child care measures. Ages of children in the study were as follows: Babies (under 1 yr.) (14%); One year (18%); Two years (24%); Three years (17%); Four years (17%); Five years (6%). Substitute child care was provided mostly in daycare homes (41%); and in-home care (34%) with one family having a live-in nanny. Day care centers, preschools and "Mother's Day Out" programs (29%), also provided substitute child care for the sample with relatives (10%) assisting too.

Data Collection Methods

The forty-nine dual-career couples who participated in the study were given an initial interview (husbands and wives separately for confidential responses). The interview verified the couples' authenticity and commitment

to participate; provided a clear explanation of the study; and the time/task analysis log; and surveyed both spouses with a 100 item questionnaire, probing determinants of parental participation in child care.

The participants then selected a week during a given two-month period and completed a time/task analysis log, recording their actual participation in child care. The logs were mailed back to the researcher or picked-up if appropriate . Initially, fifty couples had agreed to collect the time-budget data, but after many months of reminder phone calls and letters a total of forty-nine couples did complete and return their time/task logs. A follow-up interview is being planned for the future to help the parents and researchers probe the determinants of greater shared child care and the innovating processes which they utilize in their successful management of career and family. These intensive interviews will be recorded and analyzed for their content. Case studies will supplement the interview analysis providing examples of patterns of shared child care.

Limitations of Sample

As described earlier, the sampling techniques employed provided the career representation which the researcher had hoped for but clearly did not provide a random sample of all dual-career families in the Indianapolis area. The researcher spent much time and effort trying to gain access to employee and professional association lists with no avail, thus a snowball sampling technique was employed to recruit families. A strict "career" definition from the literature was also applied throughout the recruitment process, gaining a small and homogenious population. Admittedly the results reported here may not be generalizable to the entire population of dual-career families in the United States.

Analysis Strategy

The time/task analysis log recorded the amount of time and child care responsibilities that the dual career parents assumed with their young children. Total minutes spent in caregiving tasks were tallied under five major child care dimensions (i.e., physical, affective, cognitive, social and other needs such as transportation, spiritual activities and childcare arrangements). The open-ended log format which had been pretested, allowed the parents to report all the caregiving activities that they do in order to meet the total needs of their young children.

The amount of parental time spent in child care tasks was then divided into the three main patterns of the division of labor, often refered to in the literature (i.e., traditional - father participation 0%-20% (i.e., of all the time couples spend in child care) mother participation 80%-100%; transitional - father participation 20%-40%/mother participation 60%-80%; role sharing (egalitarian)-father/mother participation 40%-60%). Thus, couples were assigned to "Couple Type" categories of traditional, transitional or egalitarian for their total time shared in child care and for each of the task dimensions (i.e., physical, affective, cognitive, social, and other).

The initial interview survey included demographic data and information on dual-career wives' and husbands' work, attitudes, support, and background measures related to parent participation in childcare. These independent variables for both husbands and wives were viewed as determinants of shared child care and were related with the dependent variables of parental shared child care (i.e., time and tasks) dimenisions. A chi square analysis was done to test for significance at the .05 level.

Results

Dual-career couples in the study spent an average of 54 hours in child care a week. Wives averaged 28 hours of child care with husbands holding a 26 hour average. Total amount of time for couples participating in caregiving tasks ranged from 30 hours to 110 hours a week. The average amount of hours that parents spent within the dimensions of child care are as follows: meeting the child's physical needs ($\bar{X}$ =40); affective needs ($\bar{X}$ = 2); cognitive needs ($\bar{X}$ = 9); and social needs ($\bar{X}$ = 9).

From the time analysis data, the couples were assigned to categories of the division of labor in child care, ranging from traditional to transitional and egalitarian (role sharing). The time analysis provided a breakdown of 20 egalitarian couples, 26 transitional couples and 3 traditional couples. The latter three traditional couples were filtered from the chi square analysis to focus on thetransitional and egalitarian determinants of role sharing. Therefore the sample size was 46 for the chi square analysis.

Chi square analysis was employed to test for significant associations between each of the work variables and each of the parental role sharing variables (See appendix). The structural work variables included : measures of number of work hours and job flexibility and the attitudinal work variables included personal fulfillment with career and consideration of family career status. None of the relationships between work variables and parental role sharing were statistically significant according to the chi square test.

Unexpectedly, the chi square results indicated the insignificant relationships between the work variables and the measures of parental role sharing. These findings prove to be somewhat incon-

sistent with past studies which reported the significance of structural work variables when related to role sharing. Perhaps, the attitudinal obstacles are greater in prohibiting parental role sharing than structural work variables. It is possible that structural workplace variables are not as significant in determining role sharing in dual-career couples as other dual-employment couples. Additionally, it may be easier to blame structural workplace considerations for influencing role sharing instead of focusing on attitudinal variables. Also, the analysis strategy may have been unappropriate, with a correlation analysis being the better test for significance.

Conclusions

While the sample of dual-career couples in this study appear to engage in parental role sharing to a greater extent than other American family types, it remains the mother who truly combines career and family. The results of this study suggest, however that career mothers are personally fulfilled with their professional work and most often consider their family career status as equally important as their husband's. Another promising sign is the number of women in the sample in non-traditional careers (i.e., physicians, attorneys, scientists, business, etc.) who hold prestigious positions in their fields. As always, it was disheartening to learn the disparity between income levels for men and women.

The insignificant associations between work variables and parental role sharing variables suggest employment of further analysis strategies. Other variables (i.e., background, attitudes, support systems) should be tested for significance in regard to greater parental sharing. Future research initiatives should continue to explore the relationships between work and family.

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Work Variable Items on Interview Questionnaire

Structural Work Variables

Number of Hours worked per week? _____

Job Flexibility - Inflexibie 1 2 3 4 5 Flexible

Attitudinal Work Variables

Personal Fulfillment with Career - Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

Do you consider your career as the (Primary/Equal/Secondary) career in your family?

APPENDIX

Time/Task Analysis Log

(One week Period)

Date	Time Begun	Task*	Responsible for Task	Done with Spouse
Day of Week	Time Ended		Delegated Task	

*I am interested in all caregiving activities that parents must assume in order to meet the total needs of their young children. This includes the physical needs (e.g. diapering, bathing, clothing, laundering, feeding, taking care of health needs, cleaning up toys and room, motor development-physical exercise, indoor and outdoor play, climbing, jumping, running, etc., art work - coloring, painting, etc.); affective or emotional needs (e.g., nurturing, holding, relating to feelings in any way); cognitive or intellectual needs (e.g., playing, learning activities, reading, counting, rhymes, pretending, giving information, etc.); and social needs (e.g., social interaction with peers, siblings, adults, moral development, discipline, etc.). Spiritual activities, shopping, child care arrangements should also be added to this log.

Some of these needs overlap in other spheres. Please do not worry about what category the task falls into....simply report the task. Include any discussion which may help me to better understand the full depth and breadth of the activity.

TABLE 1

Parental Role Sharing by Number of Work Hours

	Wife's Total Number of Work Hours			
Couple Type	0-40 Hours	41-50 Hours	51+ Hours	Total
Transitional	15 (63%)	7 (58%)	5 (50%)	27
Egalitarian	9 (37%)	5 (42%)	5 (50%)	19
Total	24	12	10	N=46

X^2 = .02 Statistically Insignificant

TABLE 2

Parental Role Sharing by Number of Work Hours

	Husband's Total Number of Work Hours			
Couple Type	0-40 Hours	41-50 Hours	51+ Hours	Total
Transitional	8 (47%)	11 (69%)	8 (62%)	27
Egalitarian	9 (53%)	5 (31%)	5 (38%)	19
Total	17	16	13	N=46

X^2 = 1.64 Statistically Insignificant

TABLE 3

Parental Role Sharing by Job Flexibility

	Wife's Job Flexibility[1]		
Couple Type	Less Flexible	More Flexible	Total
Transitional	15 (54%)	11 (61%)	26
Egalitarian	13 (46%)	7 (39%)	20
Total	28	18	N=46

X^2 = .02 Statistically Insignificant

1 Less Flexible includes 1-3 on scale
More Flexible includes 4-5 on scale

TABLE 4

Parental Role Sharing by Job Flexibility

	Husband's Job Flexibility[2]		
Couple Type	Less Flexible	More Flexible	Total
Transitional	12 (67%)	15 (54%)	27
Egalitarian	6 (33%)	13 (46%)	19
Total	18	28	N=46

X^2 = .32 Statistically Insignificant

2 Less Flexible includes 1-3 on scale
More Flexible includes 4-5 on scale

TABLE 5

Parental Role Sharing by Personal Fulfillment With Career

Wife's Personal Fulfillment with Career[3]

Couple Type	Fulfilled	Very Fulfilled	Total
Transitional	15 (63%)	12 (55%)	27
Egalitarian	9 (37%)	10 (45%)	19
Total	24	22	N=46

X^2 = .07 Statistically Insignificant

3 Fulfilled includes 1-4 on scale
Very fulfilled includes 5 on scale

TABLE 6

Parental Role Sharing by Personal Fulfillment With Career

Husband's Personal Fulfillment With Career[4]

Couple Type	Fulfilled	Very Fulfilled	Total
Transitional	20 (63%)	7 (54%)	27
Egalitarian	12 (37%)	6 (46%)	18
Total	32	13	N=46

X^2 = .05 Statistically Insignificant

4 Fulfilled includes 1-4 on scale
Very fulfilled includes 5 on scale

TABLE 7

Parental Role Sharing by Career Status

	Wife's Career Status		
Couple Type	Secondary	Equal to Primary	Total
Transitional	10 (67%)	16 (52%)	26
Egalitarian	5 (33%)	15 (48%)	20
Total	15	31	N=46

X^2 = .39 Statistically Insignificant

TABLE 8

Parental Role Sharing by Career Status

	Husband's Career Status		
Couple Type	Primary	Secondary to Equal	Total
Transitional	15 (58%)	11 (55%)	26
Egalitarian	11 (42%)	9 (45%)	20
Total	26	20	N=46

X^2 = .00 Statistically Insignificant

TABLE 9

Dimensions of Child Care (Physical) by Number of Work Hours

	Wife's Number of Work Hours		
Couple Type	0-40 Hours	41+ Hours	Total
Transitional	16 (64%)	10 (47%)	26
Egalitarian	9 (36%)	11 (53%)	20
Total	25	21	N=46

X^2 = .65 Statistically Insignificant

TABLE 10

Dimensions of Child Care (Physical) by Number of Work Hours

	Husband's Number of Work Hours			
Couple Type	0-40 Hours	41-50 Hours	51+ Hours	Total
Transitional	8 (44%)	9 (60%)	8 (62%)	25
Egalitarian	10 (56%)	6 (40%)	5 (38%)	21
Total	18	15	13	N=46

X^2 = 1.18 Statistically Insignificant

TABLE 11

Dimensions of Child Care (Physical) by Job Flexibility

	Wife's Job Flexibility[5]		
Couple Type	Less Flexible	More Flexible	Total
Transitional	14 (52%)	10 (53%)	24
Egalitarian	13 (48%)	9 (47%)	22
Total	27	19	N=46

X^2 = .06 Statistically Insignificant

5 Less Flexible includes 1-3 on scale
More Flexible includes 4-5 on scale

TABLE 12

Dimensions of Child Care (Physical) by Job Flexibility

	Husband's Job Flexibility[6]		
Couple Type	Less Flexible	More Flexible	Total
Transitional	11 (58%)	13 (48%)	24
Egalitarian	8 (42%)	14 (52%)	22
Total	19	27	N=46

X^2 = .13 Statistically Insignificant

6 Less Flexible includes 1-3 on scale
More Flexible includes 4-5 on scale

TABLE 13

Dimensions of Child Care (Physical) by Personal Fulfillment With Career

Couple Type	Wife's Personal Fulfillment With Career[7] Fulfilled	Very Fulfilled	Total
Transitional	15 (60%)	10 (48%)	25
Egalitarian	10 (40%)	11 (52%)	21
Total	25	21	N=46

X^2 = .29 Statistically Insignificant

7 Fulfilled includes 1-4 on scale
Very fulfilled includes 5 on scale

TABLE 14

Dimensions of Child Care (Physical) by Personal Fulfillment With Career

Couple Type	Husband's Personal Fulfillment With Career[8] Fulfilled	Very Fulfilled	Total
Transitional	19 (56%)	6 (50%)	25
Egalitarian	15 (44%)	6 (50%)	21
Total	34	12	N=46

X^2 = .00 Statistically Insignificant

8 Fulfilled includes 1-4 on scale
Very fulfilled includes 5 on scale

TABLE 15

Dimensions of Child Care (Physical) by Career Status

	Wife's Career Status		
Couple Type	Primary to Equal	Secondary	Total
Transitional	15 (50%)	11 (69%)	26
Egalitarian	15 (50%)	5 (31%)	20
Total	30	16	N=46

X^2 = .83 Statistically Insignificant

TABLE 16

Dimensions of Child Care (Physical) by Career Status

	Husband's Career Status		
Couple Type	Secondary to Equal	Primary	Total
Transitional	12 (48%)	14 (67%)	26
Egalitarian	13 (52%)	7 (33%)	20
Total	25	21	N=46

X^2 = .92 Statistically Insignificant